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ABSTRACT

The aim of the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) of Australia is to foster curriculum and materials development from preschool to post-secondary levels. A broad concept of curriculum includes the totality of experience which a child undergoes during his schooling. Curriculum development under this definition is concerned with developing materials, practices, and organizations which affect this experience. The task of CDC is seen as being concerned with this development in areas such as resources, sequencing of learning activities, teacher-pupil interaction, organization of the learning situation, and the teacher's general approach to children and teaching. The proposed operations of the centre are defined in terms of the following six functions: (1) the conduct and support of projects; (2) the provision of a clearinghouse and information analysis service; (3) field development; (4) the provision of advisory, technical, and evaluative services; (5) the provision of opportunities for training in curriculum development skills; and (6) arrangements for the printing and marketing of materials. These functions are interdependent. Together they provide a framework for determining the services and leads that a national center can provide to schools and other curriculum agencies. The structure to carry out these functions envisages three branches which include the CDC Information Centre, the Curriculum Development and Research Branch, and the Administrative Branch. (RC)

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CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Functions and mode of operation of the Curriculum Development Centre

proposed by the
Interim Council (CDC)
September 1974

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
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PREFACE

On 13 June 1973 the Minister for Education, the Honourable Kim E. Beazley, M.P. announced the establishment of the Curriculum Development Centre. He outlined the tasks of the Centre as follows:

- to undertake curriculum development tasks and to develop teaching and learning materials for use in schools;
- to commission and support curriculum and materials development;
- to display equipment and materials;
- to publish assessments and information about equipment and materials;
- to provide advisory services relating to curriculum and materials development; and
- to arrange the printing and marketing of materials.

Additionally, the Centre would be expected to provide for continuing activities related to the products of the Australian Science Education Project (ASEP) when that project terminated in March 1974.

The Centre is to be a statutory body, and pending the necessary legislation an Interim Council was established by the Minister to initiate all functions of the Centre as early as possible and to:

a. establish liaison and working relations with existing bodies interested in curriculum development;
b. determine staffing requirements, in co-operation with the Director, when appointed;
c. advise on the location, extent and nature of the accommodation for the Centre; and
d. advise on arrangements for publication of materials.

In the formation of the Interim Council, a number of bodies have been consulted, including the Conference of Directors-General of Education, the Schools Commission, the National Council of Independent Schools, the Federal Catholic Education Office, the Australian Council of State Schools Organisations, the Australian Teachers' Federation, the Australian Advisory Committee on Research and Development in Education, and institutions involved in teacher education.

Mr Geoff Spring was appointed as Principal Executive Officer of the Interim Council, and Mr Herbert Townsend, Principal Research Fellow at La Trobe University, was invited to serve as consultant.

The Interim Council held its first meeting on 17 December 1973 and has since met at approximately monthly intervals in Canberra and in State capitals. Having drafted guidelines for the initiation of the Centre's functions, the Interim Council submitted these guidelines to a conference, held in Canberra on 28-30 April 1974,

attended by representatives of education authorities, teacher associations and other bodies with an interest in curriculum development. The various views expressed by participants at the national conference have been taken into account by the Interim Council in arriving at the present statement of the Centre's functions and mode of operation.

AIM OF THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

The Interim Council, bearing in mind the tasks passed to it by the Minister, has stated the fundamental aim of the Centre as being:

> 'to foster curriculum and materials development from pre-school to post-secondary levels'.

BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

A broad concept of curriculum includes the totality of experience which a child undergoes during his schooling. Curriculum development, under this definition, is concerned with developing materials, practices and organisations which affect this experience.

The task of CDC is seen as being concerned with this development in such areas as resources, sequencing of learning activities, teacher pupil interaction, organisation of the learning situation, and the teacher's general approach to children and teaching.

In proposing this broad range of concerns, the Council has taken regard of three important points. First, none of the items listed can be considered to be more central to curriculum development than the others. New materials, for example, are bound explicitly or implicitly to entail optional procedures for using them often with important implications for classroom or even for school organisation. For instance, one of the most striking features of classrooms in which ASEP materials are used is the accompanying change in teaching procedures.

Second, there is the need to distinguish between conclusion-oriented research and curriculum development. The CDC will most clearly be interested in the latter and would only enter the field of the former in conjunction with other agencies, as for example, AACRDE.

Third, there is a need to distinguish between the development of prototypes and demonstration of possibilities on the one hand and taking decisions on curriculum policy on the other. The former is a task appropriate to the CDC but the latter is the responsibility of such agencies as State Departments of Education, the Schools Commission and schools themselves.

Much curriculum development work is already in progress in Australia, some conducted, guided or sponsored by various education agencies (curriculum branches of Education Departments, the Schools Commission, tertiary institutions, etc.) and some through the efforts of interested individuals. The CDC should not seek to replace or discourage such enterprise but rather to increase its effectiveness through joint operation, co-ordination and assistance.

A network of communication between agencies and the dissemination of curriculum information among interested parties could be of great assistance to all.

Teachers need to be involved as much as possible in any inquiry into present needs, in the formulation of tentative solutions and in the ensuing development, if

the resulting materials and teaching approaches are to have maximum effect in classrooms. The involvement of teachers in the process of development is likely to be at least as valuable to them as the end-products of that process. Thus the participation of teachers in large and small-scale projects and field development activities should have high priority.

Remembering that pupils must be regarded as the major group affected by the use of any new materials or procedures, development workers should be conscious of both their needs and their reactions. The extent to which pupils can be involved at various levels in curriculum choice or curriculum development needs to be explored.

In the words of the Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, 'schools have much to gain from the involvement of the community in educational programs'. Parents and members of the wider community should, therefore, be consulted on curriculum development matters.

Many curriculum development functions require the services of personnel with special skills. The supply of persons with these skills will be augmented by the provision of opportunities for persons wishing to train in this area to gain work experience associated with specific projects.

FUNCTIONS OF THE CENTRE

These considerations have led the Interim Council to define the proposed operations of the Centre in terms of six functions. These are:

a. The conduct and support of projects
b. The provision of a clearing house and information analysis service
c. Field development
d. The provision of advisory, technical and evaluative services
e. Provision of opportunities for training in curriculum development skills
f. Arrangements for the printing and marketing of materials.

The six functions outlined above are interdependent. For example, a function of field development will be to set up a communication network between teachers and the Centre. Together they provide a framework for determining the services and leads that a national centre can provide to schools and other curriculum agencies. The Centre will take time to develop its full capacity.

The following paragraphs indicate some of the things that the Centre will seek to do when it is fully operational.

Conduct and support of projects

The Interim Council distinguishes between exploratory activities investigating possibilities in curriculum development, on the one hand, and large-scale curriculum development and implementation on the other. The Centre plans to take or encourage initiative in projects of the first kind, after due consultation with other bodies. However, it expects to participate in larger-scale programs mainly in conjunction with State, Commonwealth and independent education authorities.

The Centre will concern itself with a variety of projects, most of which will fall into one of the three following categories: those which are Centre-conducted; those which the Centre commissions; and those for which the Centre provides support to other groups or agencies.

'Centre-conducted' projects will usually operate through development teams on secondment and based in State and independent schools or attached to colleges or universities. Teams will develop a variety of formal and informal links to State curriculum, media, or teaching aids branches and will also offer participation to interested, co-operating teachers. It is envisaged that the Centre will also on occasion undertake projects using its own staff and facilities.

'Commissioned' projects may be directly commissioned out to subject associations, colleges, universities, commercial publishers or others.

'Supported' projects would normally emanate from individual teachers or associations. Support may involve financial support or the provision of expert advice, or both. Such projects may include some whose main purpose is the development of curriculum and materials but which also have implications for school and classroom organisation. Similarly others may be linked with encouraging teachers in their curriculum development activities. Some projects will involve all of these aspects.

Projects may emanate from the Centre, be submitted spontaneously by outside bodies, or be submitted by outside bodies at the suggestion of the Centre.

Projects envisaged by the Interim Council as taking place in the first year or two of the Centre's operation include research projects, development projects (some of which are already under way or have received approval) and open-ended or 'seed' projects.

Research projects

Research projects will in the first instance be directed towards establishing priorities for future work in curriculum development, and will include a mapping of current development work in Australia and mounting a research project to establish future needs.

This latter may involve critical analysis of the philosophical bases of present curricula and an examination of possible new models: the Centre would seek to involve leading Australian practitioners in curriculum development in this process. Research activities will be carried out in consultation with the Australian Advisory Committee on Research and Development in Education.

Development projects

Development projects are activities intended to result in improvement in education through the medium of curriculum resources such as materials, books, or new approaches to teacher-pupil interaction.

Some projects will require considerably greater investment of resources, both of manpower and money than others and will be such that they open up new perspectives in a subject area in the total school curriculum and follow these through in detail, resulting in new materials or new teaching strategies. One such project already accepted for funding by the Council, with the approval of the Minister for Education, is the Social Education Materials Project (SEMP). This project, covering a wide range of topics in social education, will have development teams working in all States, with close collaboration of education authorities, teachers in social education and the CDC.

While it would be expected that all curriculum development projects would result in a change of perspective, not all of them will be as wide-ranging, or require such large investment, as SEMP. The Council also wishes to encourage small-scale projects undertaken by teachers, members of college and university staffs and others who wish to try out individual approaches, and there is room for a wide range of projects between these two extremes.

'Seed' projects

Some projects may be framed as feasibility studies for larger-scale projects or, while not originally having this in mind, may open the way to wider-scale work. These 'seed' projects may help to identify important aspects for future developments. For example, a small grant of $2,000 has already been made to conduct a feasibility study in the field of Aboriginal studies.

An important aspect too often overlooked in writing proposals for projects is that of dissemination. Ideally, in teacher-based curriculum development, dissemination would go hand in hand with development, but in any case the initial implementation should be carried out by the developers if the philosophy underlying new approaches is to be transmitted as faithfully as are the material products. The dissemination aspect of Centre projects will be carried out partly through the publications of the CDC Information Centre, partly through close collaboration with State education authorities through in-service training. The Centre will expect proposers to provide in their project design and budget for dissemination, including, where appropriate, publication and distribution.

Provision of a clearing house and information analysis service

An important function of the Centre will be to make available information about current curriculum developments in Australia and overseas to teachers planning their work in schools and to curriculum developers who wish to know about work in related fields. This service will be provided by setting up a clearing house and information analysis facility, the task of which will be to acquire, evaluate and store information pertaining to curriculum development and to make it quickly available in answer to inquiries. In this way teachers, administrators of curriculum and research agencies, and others will be able to draw upon a bank of curriculum information. Means will be explored to encourage teachers and others actively to use these information exchange facilities.

In addition to the selection of relevant materials in compiling answers to specific questions, the Information Centre will also compile regular summaries of information of more general interest. These will be made available along with other publications designed to:

i provide regular information for teachers;
ii provide cross-fertilisation between teachers centres and other agencies;
iii report on projects undertaken and sponsored by the Centre;
iv report on evaluation of overseas and locally-published materials based on either critical review or field trials;
v provide other agencies with regular summaries of the latest overseas developments, particularly with respect to educational technology, media, systems, outcomes of curriculum projects and results of educational research which directly bear on classroom practice.

The Centre proposes to arrange permanent display space for materials including those commercially produced from Australia and overseas. As the Centre will have its own meeting facilities for teachers and others, special displays will be arranged when national subject bodies or associations use the Centre's facilities for national conferences. The Centre also intends to develop mobile displays and arrange clearing house outlets in major cities and regional centres, in curriculum research branches of Departments of Education, in suitable education centres, or community centres such as 'education shops'.

The Information Centre will maintain a specialist curriculum library with inter-library loan links to other appropriate libraries. An emphasis in collection of material will be on acquiring from overseas centres of research and development in education, a comprehensive coverage of items which are not readily available commercially in Australia.

The relationship of the Information Centre to field development is explored in the next section of this document.

Field development

The general aim of the Centre in promoting field development is to provide all possible assistance to ensure the ready acceptance in schools of innovations which arise from curriculum development initiatives supported by the Centre.

Field development may be thought of as helping teachers (i) to focus their thinking on three aspects of curriculum; that is, general educational needs of children, the nature of the subject matter, and a general understanding of, and views about, teaching techniques; and (ii) to create or utilise materials and methods which they understand in these terms.

The implementation of a particular change involves the teacher in a variety of decisions about what aspects of the innovation he will adopt and how he will use them. Such decisions are influenced by the considerations outlined above. Viewpoints on these considerations will be implicit in curriculum materials or procedures produced by curriculum developers and, ideally, should be stated explicitly by the developers. The closeness of the match between the teacher's viewpoint and those implicit in the new materials or procedures will help to determine the successful use of the innovation.

It is recognised that much of field development, viewed in this way, is a function of in-service teacher education. Much will occur informally through the teacher's association with others in work group settings such as schools, departments within schools, teachers centres and subject associations. Much will occur through formal and informal interchanges between such groups and larger resource centres, such as those established by State Departments of Education or the education centres being established with assistance from the Schools Commission, and through contact with advisory teachers.

The Centre for its part can assist by supporting co-operative curriculum efforts in relatively small groups. This may take many forms, including:

i funding of curriculum projects proposed by such groups and for which applications will be invited from time to time;

ii providing technical advice, samples of materials and literature relevant to the needs of each group;

iii providing suggestions for and literature on the availability of specialised services;

iv inviting the participation of such groups in aspects of larger curriculum projects.

The Centre, through its clearing house function, will also assist in the diffusion of innovations, by setting up networks of communication and by disseminating information relating to the Centre's larger-scale curriculum development projects.

Services

The Centre will be responsible for supervision of funded projects, and supervision is here intended to signify not only monitoring progress but some measure of involvement of the Centre in the work of projects. It will of course be necessary to see that projects maintain their time-tables and work within budgets. The Centre will also need to provide services and assistance in such matters as communication with teachers on a wide scale, preparation of art work or conditions applying to the engagement of paid help.

The basic services provided by the Centre will be offered through its Information Centre and development sections. Advice will also be available from the Centre's specialist personnel including exchange experts from overseas. Apart from technical personnel such as illustrators and editors, the most important of these will be professional curriculum personnel skilled in curriculum evaluation.

This advice could relate to procedures that can be used in:

establishing aims, criteria and objectives; developing curriculum materials; conducting classroom trials; evaluation of trial versions; assessment of student progress; preparing manuscripts for trial or publication; disseminating the products of curriculum development; administration of project groups.

The Centre will, when appropriate, negotiate and supervise publication and distribution of funded project materials including audio-visual materials. It will also assist in organisation and conduct of familiarisation courses associated with these projects.

Training

While involvement of practising teachers is stressed, it is clear that the Centre and other agencies concerned with curriculum development, such as curriculum research branches in State Departments of Education, will require personnel specially trained in such activities as materials production, analysis, evaluation, and dissemination of curriculum information, field development, and production services. The Council recognises a need to increase and maintain the pool of competence in this area. The Centre will promote and co-operate in schemes in which teachers and graduate students are given the opportunity for secondment to work on one of the activities of the Centre on either a part-time or full-time basis. The Centre will also from time to time itself arrange workshops, and seminars and courses in curriculum development areas, and will also co-operate with other agencies in the provision of such courses. Encouragement will also be given to the establishment of courses at tertiary level leading to recognised qualifications in curriculum development.

Printing and marketing of materials

The Centre will arrange for the publication and marketing of materials produced through projects which it undertakes.

The Centre may also arrange for the publication and marketing of materials whose production it has supported or which are offered to it by other bodies. How the Centre will operate here will depend on a number of considerations, such as the educational value of the materials, their likely interest and usefulness to teachers and consultation with other individuals or bodies involved in their development. The Centre will also make arrangements for matters relating to republication rights and copyright for overseas publication of materials produced by the Centre.

PROPOSED STAFFING STRUCTURE

A structure to carry out the functions described above is illustrated on p. 9. This structure envisages three branches — CDC Information Centre, the Curriculum Development and Research Branch, and Administrative Branch. The Curriculum Development and Research Branch would be responsible for most of the work concerned with projects and field development.

Because of the interdependence of the Centre's functions these branches will not of course operate as discrete entities. The structure therefore delineates main tasks but not inter-relationships.

Inquiries should be addressed to:

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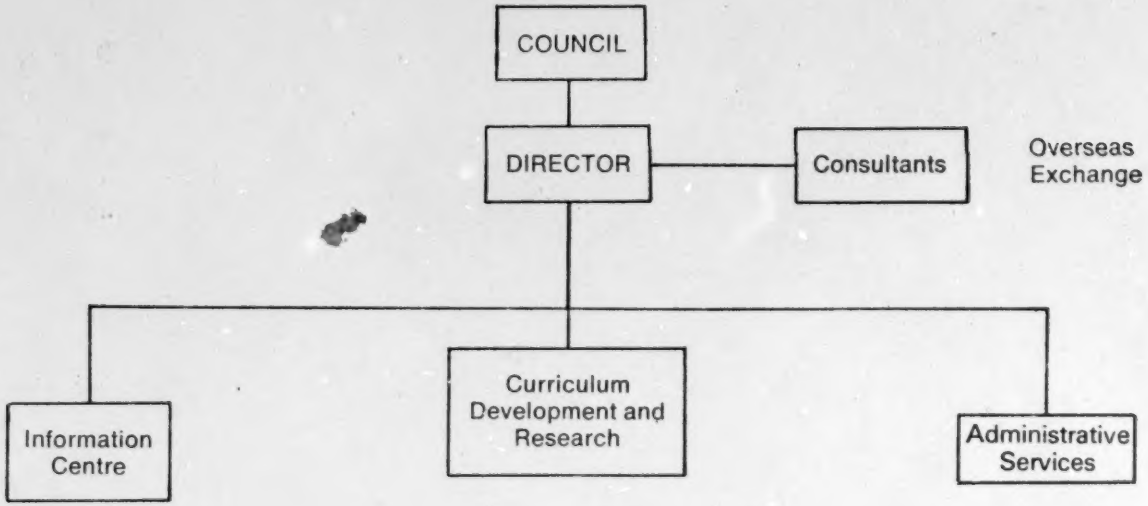
RT4/1249

PROPOSED STAFFING STRUCTURE



a. Library services
b. Information
c. Materials assessment (other sources)

a. Curriculum research and evaluation
b. Projects
c. Field development
d. ASEP servicing
e. Professional development

a. Administration
b. Publications